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ABSTRACT

Intended for special educators and administrators, the paper addresses the educational implications of closed head injury in children. Characteristics of head injured students are noted, including previous successful experiences in social and academic settings, inconsistent performance patterns, and cognitive deficits which are present as in other handicaps but which are uneven in extent of damage and rate of recovery. Types of deficits in head injury are described for five functioning areas: communication (such as problems in language, reading, and abstraction); physical ability (including impairments in mobility, coordination, and vision); cognitive ability (such as difficulty in problem solving and short and long term memory); perceptual motor skills (including problems in motor speed and sequencing); behavior (such as impulsivity, poor judgement, and disinhibition); and social behavior (such as distraction in noisy surroundings and immature behavior). The bulk of the paper charts deficits, classroom behaviors, skills, teaching strategies, and resources for the following cognitive-communication areas: general behaviors, social behaviors, expressive language, receptive language, and written language. Thirty-one resources are listed to supplement classroom materials. (CL)

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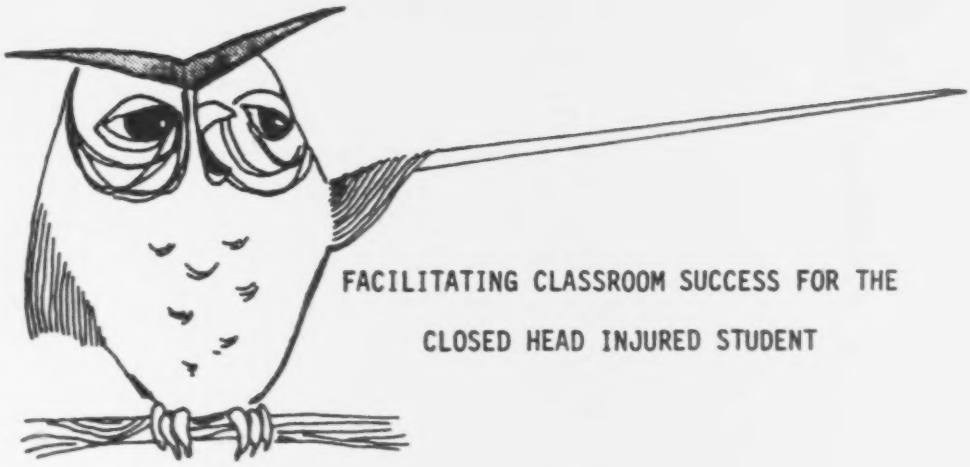

# FACILITATING CLASSROOM SUCCESS FOR THE CLOSED HEAD INJURED STUDENT

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Chicago, IL
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# FACILITATING CLASSROOM SUCCESS FOR THE CLOSED HEAD INJURED STUDENT

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The purpose of this presentation is to provide special educators and administrators with an understanding of problems which may occur as a result of closed head injury (CHI), the potential effects these problems may have on educational performance, and specific adaptive strategies educators can implement to effectively serve these students within the educational setting.

Since there have been significant improvements in emergency medical response procedures and trauma center treatments, more children are surviving traumatic injuries from motor vehicle accidents, falls, and abuse. It is estimated that as many as 18,000 children will sustain closed head injuries annually concomittant to their accidents. A significant number of these children will return to a public school educational environment following a period of physical recuperation and rehabilitation in a hospital.

When the CHI student returns to school, two scenarios may take place. First, the student may be returned to the regular classroom setting and begin to experience problems and academic failure not experienced prior to sustaining the

head injury. Secondly (in cases where the damage as a result of the injury is more apparant) the student may be placed in a special education program. In both situations, educators may find that teaching strategies which have worked with other students and with other types of handicaps are not suited to the needs of this population.

This presentation will provide participants with information and insights that will help them more effectively meet the needs of the CHI student within their educational setting. The presentation will discuss four major topics as they relate to providing educational services for the closed head injured student. These topics are: 1) the language, physical, social, emotional and cognitive defecits which may result from the closed head injury;

2) specific behaviors which students may exhibit in the classroom as a result of each of these defecits;

3) teaching strategies which can be employed to accomodate each of the defecits; and

4) resources which can be utilized to supplement classroom materials.

The presentation will be application-oriented. Participants will have an opportunity to interact with the presentors and other members of the audience. Several cases will be presented to illustrate the educational decisions which must be made concerning utilizing alternative teaching

strategies and resources with this population.

A guidebook will be given to participants to accompany the presentation. The guidebook is organized by defecit area and provides clear explanations of each of the four topics (deficits, behaviors, teaching strategies, and resources). The guidebook can be used as a focus for discussing the student's problems and needs with his family and other educational personnel, or as a basis for formulating the educational plan and resources needed to help the student.

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## OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

I. What is CHI?

   A. Etiology

   B. Demographics

   C. Stages of recovery

II. Behavioral deficits as a result of the CHI

III. Preparing for the CHI's return to school

IV. Cognitive-communication areas affected by the head injury, examples of classroom behaviors, and educational strategies

V. Resources to supplement classroom materials

## HEAD INJURED AND OTHER TYPES OF DISABILITIES: DIFFERENTIATING CHARACTERISTICS

The head injured student is not a "peer" of other handicapped students. The learning handicap has been acquired. Following are some of the characteristics of the head injured that make them different from individuals with other disabilities. Educators must be aware of these differences and their effect on learning in order to appropriately plan for class placement and participation. The head injured student has:

- a previous successful experiences in academic and social settings
- a pre-morbid self concept of being normal
- discrepancies in ability levels
- inconsistent patterns of performance
- variability and fluctuation in the recovery process resulting in unpredictable and unexpected spurts of progress
- more extreme problems with generalizing, integrating, or structuring information
- poor judgment and loss of emotional control which makes the student appear to be emotionally distrubed at times
- cognitive deficits which are present as in other handicaps but are uneven in extent of damage and rate of recovery
- combinations of conditions resulting from the CHI which are unique and do not fall into usual categories of disabilities
- inappropriate behaviors which may be more exaggerated (more impulsive, more distractable, more emotional, more difficulty with memory, information processing, organization, and flexibility)
- learning style which requires utilization of a variety of compensatory and adaptive strategies
- some high level skills which may be intact, making it difficult to understand why the student will have problems performing lower level tasks
- a previously learned base of information which assists relearning rapidly

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## TYPES OF DEFICITS IN HEAD INJURY

The following characteristics can occur in the child with traumatic head injury.

**Communication:** Observe for problems in

- -language
- -articulation
- -word finding (anomia)
- -reading
- -writing
- -computation
- -abstraction

**Physical:** Look for impairments in

- -mobility
- -strength
- -coordination
- -vision
- -hearing

**Cognitive:** Watch for difficulty in

- -memory - short and long term
- -thought processes
- -conceptual skills
- -problem solving

**Perceptual motor:** Think about involvement in

- -visual neglect
- -visual field cuts
- -motor apraxia
- -motor speed
- -motor sequencing

**Behavior:** Be aware that brain damage may account for

- -impulsivity
- -poor judgement
- -disinhibition
- -dependency
- -anger outbursts
- -denial
- -depression
- -emotional lability
- -apathy
- -lethargy
- -poor motivation

**Social:** Sensitize yourself to know the head injured child may

- -not learn from peers
- -not learn from social situations
- -behave like a much younger child
- -withdraw
- -distract in noisy surroundings
- -become lost even in familiar surroundings

DePompei and Blosser
March, 1986

COGNITIVE - COMMUNICATION AREAS

Deficits

Classroom Behaviors

Skills

Teaching Strategies

Resources

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Council for Exceptional Children
Chicago, Illinois, 1987

## COGNITIVE-COMMUNICATION AREA: General Behaviors

| Deficits | Classroom Behaviors | Skills and Teaching Strategies | Resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| Decreased judgment | Easily persuaded by others (can be convinced by others to act inappropriately; abuse drugs and alcohol)<br><br>Impulsive | <u>Decision Making</u><br>Select a classroom buddy to keep the student aware of instructions, class rules, appropriate social conduct.<br><br>Establish a system of verbal or nonverbal signals to cue the student to alter his behavior (call the student's name, touch him, use a written sign or hand signal). | (Refer to pages O, P, Q<br>5, 6, 7, 14 |
| | Speaks out of turn in class, gets up and moves about the room or leaves the classroom<br><br>Careless about safety. Does not look before crossing streets; poor decisions about playing on the playground equipment or activities in physical education class<br><br>Unreasonable demands to be unsupervised (want to begin driving again too soon) | <u>Self Monitoring</u><br>Schedule special time for freedom of movement and informal conversation.<br><br><u>Decision Making</u><br>Establish specific rules for behavior in certain places and times of the day; practice implementation frequently in controlled situations before allowing the child to do something independently.<br><br><u>Self Awareness</u><br>Make the student aware of the need for supervision (e.g. motoric problem, safety, etc.).<br><br>Establish small steps for progress toward greater independence. | |



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| Deficits | Classroom Behaviors | Skills and Teaching Strategies | Resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | (Refer to pages O, P, Q) |
| Lacks self insight | Doesn't understand the rationale behind another person's reaction to his behavior; paranoid | Awareness of Self and Others<br>Explain the cause for the other person's reaction.<br><br>Explain what would have been a better way to behave (need simplistic explanations; reasoning will not help). | 27, 28, 29, 30 |
| | Responds defensively to comments made or questions asked by teachers and fellow students | Do not react or respond as if you need to prove a point; avoid confrontation; avoid "buying into" the argument. | |
| Poor problem solving skills | Solutions to situations are not carefully thought through | Problem Solving<br>Ask questions designed to help the student identify the problem, plan out and organize implementation or a solution. | 5, 6, 16 |
| Unable to plan for the future | No recognition that there is a physical or cognitive problem or that there would be limitations to taking classes or performing tasks | Self Awareness<br>Plan activities which are similar in nature to what other classmates are doing, but adjust the level of complexity to the student's limitations.<br><br>Build on successes rather than make the student feel a failure. | 4, 7, 23 |

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## COGNITIVE-COMMUNICATION AREA: General Behaviors (Cont'd)

| Deficits | Classroom Behaviors | Skills and Teaching Strategies | C Resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | (Refer to pages O, P, Q) | |
| Recognition | No recognition of due dates or amount of time it would take to complete a class project<br><br>Forget to prepare for a field trip<br><br>Cannot pre-determine materials needed for completing class projects (material, thread, pattern for home economics) | Organization and Planning<br>Help the student formulate and use a system for maintaining organization. Require the student to carry a written log of activities, schedule of classes, list of assignments and due dates, and map of room locations. Frequently monitor the student's use of the organization system. | |
| Decreased carryover for new learning | Information presented in class on Day 1 will not be recalled or generalized on Day 3 | Compensatory Memory Strategies<br>Teach the student to categorize, associate, rehearse, chunk information. Require the student to write things. Assign a student buddy to monitor and check what has been written. | 4, 15, 25 |
| Decreased ability to generalize learned information to new or different situations | Unable to take tests where newly learned information must be applied or generalized | Memory and Recall Strategies<br>Recognize that this skill is not likely to improve, change may not occur.<br><br>Provide the student with a variety of examples of the topic or information to be tested. | 5, 6, 9, 11, 13, 14 |
| Decreased ability to store and retrieve information upon demand | Little or no attention to details in deductive reasoning tasks<br><br>Unable to recall specific details of a history lesson or all of the critical elements of a science experiment | Identifying Details<br>Use visual and auditory cues to draw attention to details (highlight, underline, use reference pictures). | 4, 5, 9, 14 |



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| Deficits | Classroom Behaviors | Skills and Teaching Strategies | Resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | (Refer to pages O, P, Q) |
| Inability to perform well in competitive and stressful situations | Argues and fights with peers on the playground | Sharing<br>Select a classroom buddy with whom the child already gets along.<br><br>Introduce sharing during small group activities; gradually include in full classroom activities; repeat the same procedure from individual to small group to large group on the playground. | 25, 27, 28, 29, 30<br> |
| Subtle non-compliance of classroom rules and active-not aggressive simply refuses to complete task (may be some truancy from some classes) | Withdrawn and not willing to participate in group activities such as work on a science project, small group discussions<br><br>Refuses to recite in class even when called upon | Initiating Self Concept<br>Begin to elicit responses from the student during individual and seat work activities when you can be assured that the student can be correct; gradually request occassional responses in front of the student's friends, then small groups; repeat until the student feels comfortable participating in a large group. | 23 |
| Rude, silly, immature for age | Makes nasty and/or inappropriate comments to fellow students and teachers<br><br>Laughs outloud during serious discussions or quiet seatwork | Judgment<br>Present the student with "what if...." situations and choices.<br><br>Give the student opportunities to verbally express judgment and decision making regarding appropriate behavior as well as opportunities to role play. | 23, 25, 26, 27, 28 29, 30 |



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| Deficits | Classroom Behaviors | Skills and Teaching Strategies | Resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | (Refer to pages O, P, Q |
| Verbally aggressive | Interrupts conversations between fellow classmates | Turntaking<br>Teach the student to concentrate on the comments of others.<br><br>Non-verbally cue the student to discontinue interruptive behaviors. | 27, 28, 29, 30 |
| Lacks initiative (ex: knows has to do homework, but can't begin; if begins will probably be able to do it) | Homework is forgotten, not completed, or not turned in | Memory Task Completion<br>Responsibility<br>Develop, with the student, a daily written assignment sheet indicating dates and times assignments are due. | 4 |
| Unable to stay on task | Unable to begin and/or complete timed math tests<br><br>Unable to sit still in class while others are busy doing seatwork or taking notes | Attention/Concentration<br>Remove distractions; verbally cue the student to "begin" a task; nonverbally regain the student's attention and direct it to the required task. | |
| | Goes from one assignment to the next, unable to complete either one; skips around while doing an assignment, completing only parts of it | | |

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| Deficits | Classroom Behaviors | Skills and Teaching Strategies | Resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | (Refer to pages O, P, Q) | |
| Low frustration tolerance | Displays an outburst of temper when others would try a different approach or request help<br> | <u>Self Awareness of Internal Stress</u><br>Do not attempt to punish the behavior using traditional behavior management approaches.<br><br>Learn to detect behaviors leading up to the outburst and intervene prior to it happening (watch the student's body language).<br><br>Allow time for the student to be away from the situation and get needed rest or emotional release.<br><br>Provide an understanding person with whom the student can share feelings and frustrations. | |
| Inconsistent performance | Homework on Day 1 is 100% correct; on Day 2 it is incorrect<br><br>Demonstrates model behavior one day and totally inappropriate behavior the next | <u>Self Monitoring</u><br>Inform the student of errors made and why they were made.<br><br>When giving an assignment, let the student know the similarities to previous work which has been completed successfully. | 17, 18 |



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| Deficits | Classroom Behaviors | Skills and Teaching Strategies | Resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | (Refer to pages O, P, ( |
| Demonstrates a difference between communication in informal situations and formal situations such as the classroom<br><br>Length of sentences and use of gestures may be normal; depth of communication is not<br><br> | Answers teacher's questions at a surface level; when pressed to give reasons why or more detail, student is unable to provide more information.<br><br>While appearing to do quite well conversationally during social situations, classroom speaking lacks detail and depth | <u>Providing Adequate and Substantial Information</u><br>Direct the amount and type of information provided by the student. Encourage conversations to develop by giving instructions such as "Tell me more"; "How many did you see..."<br><br>Role play formal conversations in small groups.<br><br>Direct the context of the student's responses with your own verbal models, cues, and leading questions.<br><br><u>Storage and Retrieval of Information</u><br>Teach memory strategies (rehearsal, chunking, visualization, association, etc.) | 1, 6, 9, 25 |
| Communication is tangential (rambling) | Conversations tend to ramble with no acknowledgement of the listener's interest or attention<br><br>Conversation may be topic related but not exactly what is desired or key to the discussion (ex: when asked to name the major food groups, the student might begin a disucssion about irrigation and growing crops) | <u>Topic Maintenance</u><br>When the student begins to deviate from the topic, either provide a non-verbal cue or stop him so he doesn't continue in front of classmates.<br><br>Teach the student to recognize nonverbal behaviors indicating lack of interest or desire to make a comment. (Work | 13, 14 |

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| Deficits | Classroom Behaviors | Skills and Teaching Strategies | Resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | (Refer to pages O, P, Q)<br>with this skill during private conversations with the student)<br><br>Teach beginning, middle, end of stories.<br><br>Stop the students' response and restate the original question; focusing the student's attention on the key issues. | |
| Word retrieval errors | Answers contain a high use of "this", "that", "those things", "whatchamacallits"<br><br>Difficulty providing answers on fill-in-the-blank tests | Word Recall<br>Teach the student association skills and to give definitions of words he cannot recall.<br><br>Teach memory strategies (rehearsal, association, visualization, etc.) | 15, 31 |
| Verbal reasoning ability is reduced | In algebra class, the student may arrive at a correct answer but not be able to recite the steps followed to solve the problem | Problem Solving<br>Teach inductive and deductive reasoning at appropriate age levels.<br><br>Reasoning<br>Privately (not during classroom situations or in front of peers) ask the student to explain answers and provide reasons | 5, 6, 10, 11, 31 |

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| Deficits | Classroom Behaviors | Skills and Teaching Strategies | Resources (Refer to pages O, P, Q) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Reduced ability to use abstractness in conversation (ambiguity, satire, inferences, drawing conclusions) | Says things that classmates interpret as satirical, funny, or bizarre although they were not intended to be that way | Semantics<br>Teach the student common phrases used for satire, idioms, puns, etc. | 5, 13, 14 |
| Delayed responses | When called upon to give an answer, the student will not answer immediately, appearing not to know the answer | Processing<br>Allow extra time for the student to discuss and explain.<br><br>Avoid asking too many questions. | |
| Unable to describe events in appropriate detail and sequence | When relating an experience, details are out of order, confused, or overlapping<br><br>Can't explain to another student the direction for playing a game in physical education class | Sequencing<br>Teach sequencing skills.<br><br>Direct the context of the student's responses. | 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 17, 18, 21, 22 |
| Inadequate labelling or vocabulary to convey clear message | Inappropriately labels tools in industrial arts class | Semantics<br>Teach the student vocabulary associated with specific subject areas and classroom activities. | 1, 6, 7, 9, 13, 17, 18, 23, 26, 31 |



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## COGNITIVE-COMMUNICATION AREA: Receptive Language

| Deficits | Classroom Behaviors | Skills and Teaching Strategies | Resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | (Refer to pages O, P, Q) |
| **Can't determine the salient features of Wh questions asked, information he has been told, or assignments he has read** | Completes the wrong assignment (teacher requested that the class complete problems 9-12; this student completes problems 1-12) | Organization<br>Encourage the student to write assignments in his daily log. | 17, 18, 24, 31 |
| Unable to determine the specific aspects of questions that need to be asked | When answering questions about the details of a history lesson, gets the details confused<br><br>When asked specific questions, responses may be related but not exact<br><br>Unable to decipher long story problems | Finding the Facts<br>Ask questions which will elicit the student's recall of important facts. | |
| Can't mentally organize information presented verbally or in written form | Performs steps of the science project out of sequence either fixating on one step or performing the most apparent step ("I knew the other steps, I just didn't need to do them.") | Sequencing<br>Provide the student with written 3 and 4 step sequences to sort and organize. Do not allow the student to skip steps in a demonstration even if he says he knows what to do. | 4, 5, 10, 11 |
| Inability to analyze and integrate information received | Executes written directions in an unorganized and incomplete manner<br><br>Goes to the gymnasium for a program when it was announced that it would be held in the auditorium | Direction Following<br>Directions should be written in 1, 2, 3, etc. steps rather than in paragraph form. | 16, 19, 20 |

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| Deficits | Classroom Behaviors | Skills and Teaching Strategies | Resources (Refer to pages O, P, Q) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Easily over-loaded by high amounts of oral information presented during classroom instruction | Appears to be daydreaming and nonresponsive while the teacher is lecturing or giving instructions | Focus Attention<br>Use pauses when giving classroom instructions to allow for processing information.<br><br>Use short, simple sentences when explaining information. | |
| Not able to read non-verbal cues of others | Unaware that the teacher or other classmates do not want to be bothered while they are working | Social Awareness<br>Use pre-established non-verbal cues to alert the student that his behavior is inappropriate.<br><br>Explain what was wrong with the behavior and what would have been appropriate. | 27, 28, 28, 30 |
| Difficulty comprehending spoken messages if presented in complex terms, rapidly or lengthy | Exhibits poor notetaking skills; unable to maintain the ability to sort out and note the important parts of the teacher's discussion | Comprehension<br>Use short, simple sentences, emphasizing key points by voice variations, intonations, etc.<br><br>Alert the student to the important topic being discussed. | 1, 7, 9, 13 |

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| Deficits | Classroom Behaviors | Skills and Teaching Strategies | Resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| Difficulty understanding or recognizing a sequence of events | Even after being back to school for a while, still gets lost in the daily routine of the school day (knowing that spelling follows math, etc.) | <u>Organization</u><br>Provide the student with a written schedule of his school routine and map of the rooms he must get to. | (Refer to pages O, P, Q) |
| Difficulty maintaining attention, comprehension, and concentration | Loses place while reading; unable to relate information recently read; easily distracted during reading assignments; unable to complete silent reading and seatwork assignments at the same rate as classmates | <u>Processing</u><br>Provide with additional time to complete classroom and homework tasks.<br><br><u>Attention Concentration</u><br>Because the student will most likely be processing at the best rate he can, provide with ample time for reading assignments.<br><br>Reduce the amount of work to be read to summaries etc. | |
| Reduced ability to understand abstractness in others' language (ambiguity, satire, inferences, drawing conclusions, etc.) | Misunderstands instructions and comments made; while classmates are responding to satire, jokes, pun, etc., the student appears to be unaware of what is so funny | <u>Semantics</u><br>Do not use these styles when presenting important information, teaching, or trying to correct the student's behavior.<br><br>Teach the student the meaning of idioms, figurative language, ambiguous phrases, etc. | 5, 13, 14 |

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| Deficits | Classroom Behaviors | Skills and Teaching Strategies | Resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | (Refer to pages O, P, Q |
| Structure and content of writing may not be of the same skill level as pre-injury<br><br>Demonstrates simplistic sentence structure and syntactic disorganization | Answers to essay test may contain numerous grammatical errors, sentence structure is incorrect and unorganized<br><br>Sentences used and topics discussed are simplistic when compared to expectations for age and grade. Themes may be short and dry. | Synctactic Complexity<br>Give the student time to go over written work with a partner or teaching aide to find and correct errors<br><br>Proofreading and Semantics<br>Provide the student with worksheets which focus on teaching vocabulary, grammar and proofreading skills | 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 24, 25 |
| Content of writing is very literal, devoid of figurative language; contains irrelevancies and unsubstantiated information | Description of a science project contains several nonessential details<br><br>If asked to write a theme about a major issue in government class, the paper will contain several issue assertions with no evidence to support the assertion<br><br>Essays written following the injury lack the same flair, creativity noted prior to the injury | Providing Adequate and Substantial Information and Sequencing and Expressing Ideas Through Writing<br><br>Allow the student to verbally state ideas, tape record, and write from dictation.<br><br>Present the student with "question cards" indicating the specific issues that are to be addressed in an essay or discussed in a theme. | 5, 13, 14 |

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| Deficits | Classroom Behaviors | Skills and Teaching Strategies | Resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | (Refer to pages O, P, Q |
| | | Accept that there will be a difference in skill level pre and post injury. Work at the student's current level and ability. | |
| Speed and accuracy are decreased; poor legibility | Performance on timed tests in math is slower than that of other classmates | Check Work for Accuracy<br>Accept that the student will take longer to complete assignments; reduce and alter the requirements. | |
| Poor planning of use of space on the paper<br> | Care is not given to the appearance of work<br><br>When making posters or art projects, sizes of pictures are disproportionate or located inappropriately on the paper | Spatial Relationships<br>Utilize art teaching methodology to help the student identify and correct problems.<br><br>Understand that physical capabilities may be limiting writing skills. Reteach if appropriate for age and grade. | 13 |

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## Resources to Supplement Classroom Materials


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